The Pagan Philosophy Of David Myatt

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Preface

Part One of this compilation contains short articles which discuss or which review some of David Myatt's post-2016 books and essays, and which articles serve as an introduction to Part Two which contains the complete text of the book *Western Paganism And Hermeticism: Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture*.

For the articles draw attention to or explain various aspects of Mr Myatt's philosophy and metaphysical writings such as his usage of various terms and the "new pagan metaphysics" which he has proposed.

As one of the articles importantly notes,

> "there is a cultural revolution in the truths embedded in the book *Western Paganism And Hermeticism: Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture* and in the [Myattian] texts referenced therein. But whether such truths can replace the prevalent and mistaken belief that Christianity is somehow the embodiment of Western culture remains to be seen."

For these recent works by Myatt provide "an intellectual basis for a new, an enlightened, paganism firmly rooted in an understanding of our debt to Greco-Roman, pagan, culture."

June 2018 ev

Part One

A Different Perspective

The Numinous, Ancestral Culture, And Myatt's Philosophy

Two essays by David Myatt published in 2018 – titled *Towards Understanding Ancestral Culture* and *From Mythoi To Empathy* {1} – though short compliment his two 2017 books *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* since they deal with two of the topics that are central to both books. {2}

In the first essay Myatt explains what he means by the term 'ancestral culture' – δίκη understood as fairness, as the balance, the wisdom, that ancestral customs often represent – and in the process clarifies the somewhat obscure passages at the end of his Classical Paganism text, explicitly stating that the modern paganus weltanschauung he wrote about in that book is founded on καλὸς κἀγαθός and thus "on chivalry; on manners; on gentrice romance; and on the muliebral virtues [and] gender equality."

In the second essay Myatt goes into some detail regarding what he means by the term 'numinous', details which are long-overdue and which explicitly distance him from the view of Rudolf Otto in respect of that term. For Myatt, the numinous is a perceiveration, an apprehension resulting from the human faculty of empathy, and therefore in his view goes beyond religion. Indeed, he writes that religions "have not presenced, and do not and cannot presence, the numinous as the numinous can be presenced." Instead, what does presence the numinous is the knowing that empathy provides which is the move away from mythoi and anthropomorphic deities to "an appreciation of the numinous sans denotatum and sans religion."

As with almost all of Myatt's post-2011 philosophical writings the two essays – and indeed the two books – are not only derived from his own philosophical musings and his reflections on his own pathei-mathos, but also contain references to Greco-Roman culture. Which methodology is both a strength and a weakness.

A strength, in that he brings that ancient culture alive almost as if his writings are a bridge to that past and to a future where at least some of the ancient virtues he obviously so admires (such as chivalry) may live again and be melded with the virtues – the muliebral virtues – that he understands his own pathei-mathos and our 'human culture of pathei-mathos' have made him appreciate and consider are necessary if we human beings are to change and evolve.

A weakness, in that his writings contain no references to modern philosophies and philosophers and thus lack points of reference for those interested in philosophy as an academic subject. A lack which will undoubtedly deter many from studying Myatt's somewhat complex – almost labyrinthine and undoubtedly unique – metaphysics. A metaphysics which – based as it is on concepts such as physis, πάθει μάθος, perceiveration, σωφρονεῖν, denotatum, and δίκη – will seem strange, indeed probably alien, to those nurtured on contemporary philosophy.

That said, those who make the effort to get to grips with Myatt's terminology and who are undeterred that his philosophy of pathei-mathos is scattered in pieces among multiple books and scores of essays and appears still in the process of development, will be rewarded. They will find a most decidedly Western and a decidedly pagan philosophy, rooted in the culture of Ancient Greece and Rome, which manifests the ethos of the West in a manner it has never before been manifest. Not only that, it restores that Western ethos to us, and importantly evolves it, in a distinct philosophical and refreshingly unpolitical way.

That only a few today will appreciate any of this is a sign of our unchivalrous era and of just how few still appreciate the native, the fair, the reasoned, the scholarly, culture of the West subsumed as that culture has been and increasingly is being by the rise of the uncultured, the raucous, ones among us.

R.S & K.S
2018

{1} The essays are included in the fifth edition of Myatt's *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, an Open Access gratis copy of which is available at:
https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/numinous-way-v5c-print.pdf

{2} (i) An Open Access gratis copy of *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* is available at https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/classical-paganism-v2-print.pdf (ii) An Open Access gratis copy of *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* is available at https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf

A New Perspective

The essays included in the recent book titled *Western Paganism And Hermeticism: Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture* (1) seem to me to point to a truth which is both relevant and controversial.

The book is relevant because of how our Western culture is misunderstood even by many native Europeans, and also because that culture is under attack by those – now often government supported – advocates of a 'multi-cultural society' with public advocacy of one's own native culture being (if, that is, one is of European descent) deprecated and even in some European lands deemed by certain politicians to be "advocacy of White supremacy".

The book is controversial because it describes a culture which most modern political advocates of Western culture – of Western 'civilization' – will be unfamiliar with, fixated as so many of such political advocates often seem to be with the mistaken belief that Christianity is the embodiment of that culture.

However, as described in *Western Paganism And Hermeticism* – and in the texts referenced therein – Western culture is essentially pagan and derived from the culture of ancient Greece and Rome with Christianity thus understood as a Hebraic intrusion.

The book thus provides an entirely new – perhaps even a heretical – perspective on Western culture as well as referencing texts, such as David Myatt's Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos and his Tu Es Diaboli Ianua which, with their focus on such things as καλὸς κἀγαθός, metaphysically evolve Western paganism beyond "mythoi and anthropomorphic deities (theos and theoi) to an appreciation of the numinous sans denotatum and sans religion."

There is a cultural revolution in the truths embedded in the book *Western Paganism And Hermeticism* and in the texts referenced therein. But whether such truths can replace the prevalent and mistaken belief that Christianity is somehow the embodiment of Western culture remains to be seen.

June Boyle
2018 ev

{1} The complete text of the book is included here in Part Two. Printed version: ISBN 978-1986027809

Review: Western Paganism And Hermeticism

The book consists of nine essays by various authors which deal with or which review David Myatt's translations of Hermetic texts and his two recent books *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*; plus – as an appendix – a reprint of Myatt's relevant article *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*.

In her Preface, the editor – authoress of one of the essays in the book – succinctly expresses the raison d'etre of those Myatt books and translations of Hermetic texts, and also of the included essays, writing that

> "Myatt's thesis […] is that Western paganism is essentially the classical paganism of Ancient Greece and Rome and represents the ethos of the culture of the West, which ethos the Hebraic religion of Christianity supplanted. It is our view that those translations, the associated commentaries, and such books enable an insight into, and thus the evolution of, Western culture."

She also quotes from one of those essays – *Rediscovering Western Paganism* – whose authors wrote that Myatt's translations of classical and hermetic texts "when studied together enable us to appreciate and understand the classical, pagan, ethos and thence the ethos of the West itself."

Collectively the essays present a decidedly new view of Western paganism which is contrary to that of Western neopagan revivals (sometimes described as contemporary Western paganism) and which neopagan revivals mostly devolve around ancient named gods and goddesses, such as those of Viking or Germanic mythology or those associated with Celtic legends of ancient Britain and Ireland. In addition, such modern revivals often involve romanticized rituals and ceremonies such as those now associated with the self-described Druids at Stonehenge during Summer Solstice sunrise at Stonehenge.

As the authoress of the eighth essay – A New Pagan Metaphysics – explains, referencing Myatt's books *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and T*u Es Diaboli Ianua* as well as his essay *From Mythoi To Empathy*, this new view of Western paganism is an evolution, a move away from perceiving paganism in terms of mythology and legends to a modern philosophical, ethical, and rational understanding of it. This understanding is of καλὸς κἀγαθός – of nobility of personal character – and which Ancient Greek expression, according to Myatt, represents the ethos of not only Greco-Roman culture but also the non-Christian West. As Myatt notes in his *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, it involves

> "an awareness and acceptance of one's civic duties and responsibilities undertaken not because of any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected, and not because an omnipotent deity has, via some written texts, commanded it and will punish a refusal, but because it is the noble, the honourable – the gentlemanly, the lady-like, the human – thing to do."

The book therefore takes us on a journey to a different – and for many of us to a new – world, far away from the religious attitudes of the old world as evoked, not only by Christianity, but also by neopaganism with its rituals, mythologies, polytheism and – in some manifestations – 'magical' spells, charms, and beliefs.

This new world is, as the authoress of the seventh essay – *Suffering, Honour, And The Culture Of The West* – makes clear, one where personal honour reigns manifesting as it does what is ethical and noble and ineluctably Western.

The printed version is highly recommended, despite its mere 44 pages, although given its large size of 8.5″ x 11″ (21.59 x 27.94 cm) – perhaps in homage to Myatt whose printed books are all a similar size – the page count in terms of a regular paperback is around 65 pages.

Kerri Scott
March 2018

Western Paganism And Hermeticism:
Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture

Rachael Stirling (Editor)
44 pages. 2017. ISBN 978-1986027809
978-1484096642

BISAC: Philosophy / Metaphysics

A Review of Tu Es Diaboli Ianua

The 39 page monograph which is titled *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* {1} is, as of 2018, David Myatt's latest philosophical offering. In his Exordium – a preface by any other name – he outlines the questions which he answers in the essay. The questions are

> "is Christianity a suitable presencing of the numinous… If it is not, then could that religion be reformed, by developing a Johannine Weltanschauung…Would such a reformation be a suitable presencing of the numinous, and if not, then what non-Christian alternatives – such as a paganus metaphysics – exist, and what is the foundation of such an alternative."

He writes that the essay compliments his book *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, and while his answers are somewhat convoluted and decidedly scholarly and thus other-worldly – given the copious quotations in ancient and Hellenic Greek and his own translations – he raises many interesting issues relevant to the "real world" which most of us inhabit. For he writes that

> "the problem is – or so it seems to me – in impersonal written texts. Or, more precisely, in denotatum, and thus in assigning terms – in using words – to describe an apprehension of the numinous. Which leads us to the fundamental difference between a religious apprehension of the numinous – based on received and venerated texts, on exegesis – and the paganus apprehension of the numinous as manifest in Greco-Roman culture."

And also that

> [Greco-Roman] "paganism will be examined for two reasons. Firstly, because it is manifest in a multiplicity of primary sources – from Homer to Hesiod to Cicero and beyond – and secondly because Greco-Roman culture is inextricably bound to the culture of the West and formed the basis for the European Renaissance that emerged in the 14th century, one aspect of which was a widespread appreciation of classical Art, of classical literature, and of texts such as the Corpus Hermeticum."

Having criticized Christianity, he also declaims that an important aspect of Greco-Roman paganism is a respect for ancestral custom, writing in the last section of the last chapter that the new 'numinous metaphysics' he proposes includes "a spiritual and interior (and thus not political) understanding and appreciation of our own Ancestral Culture."

Which statement about Western ancestral culture is profoundly "politically incorrect" and will be music to the ears of those few intellectuals who still champion the culture of the West.

That said, the essay is not without its problems. One is that given the copious quotations in ancient and Hellenic Greek it is, as with his book *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, difficult to classify and difficult to discern who the intended audience is. As we wrote in our review of that book,

> "many of those interested in Western paganism as a new way of life or as a modern, non-Christian, spirituality may find [this essay] too academic or too boring; while those academically interested in such matters will doubtless turn to other authors given Myatt's experiential Faustian quests, his iconoclasm, his often underserved reputation, and thus his exclusion from academia."

Personally, we think Myatt is simply making publicly available the result of his metaphysical questioning while also, as

with his *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, intending this new essay for those few Western individuals who, interested in re-discovering their Western pagan heritage, having been looking for the intellectual foundations of that pagan culture.

A second problem is that his conclusion – his description of his new pagan metaphysics – is brief to the point of almost being obscure, occupying as it does a short statement in the final paragraph, with no explanations provided.

But perhaps, given Myatt's criticism of denotata (words, and naming, by any other name) and his statement that "the culture of pathei-mathos has moved us, or can move us, beyond anthropomorphic deities, whether male or female; beyond myths and legends; beyond reliance on texts regarded as sacred and/or as divinely inspired; and even beyond the need for denotatum and religion" then this short statement that such "is the numinous" is all that is required.

K.S
December, 2017

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{1} A Gratis Open access copy of Myatt's monograph is available at: https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf

Printed version: *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, 2017. ISBN 978-1982010935.

A Pleasant Surprise

We have to admit that we were pleasantly surprised by David Myatt's new book which has the Latin title *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, a title which he himself translates as *You Are The Nexion Of The Deofel* and which book contains some very illuminating statements relevant to our times.

First, that his

> "own pathei-mathos certainly indicates that the numinous is primarily a manifestation of the muliebral and can be apprehended through a personal, an interior, balance between masculous and muliebral."

Second, that

> "a muliebral presencing is or would be manifest in a predominance of female deities; or in a dominant female deity; in legends and myths which celebrate muliebral virtues, such as empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion; and in the perception that personal love should triumph over and above adherence to abstractions. Considered exoterically – not interiorly, not esoterically – a muliebral presencing is manifest in a personal, varied, worship and devotion; in a personal weltanschauung and not in a religion; has no hierarchy; no creed, no article or articles of faith; and no texts whether written or aural."

Third, that

> "the virtues of personal honour and manners, with their responsibilities, presence the fairness, the avoidance of hubris, the natural harmonious balance, the gender equality, the awareness and appreciation of the divine, that is the numinous."

Fourth, that

> "In the case of Christianity, while some interpretations of it have in the past century slowly evolved to be somewhat more balanced in respect of the muliebral, it is still primarily a patriarchal presencing."

Myatt therefore is once again publicly aligning himself with critics of the masculous, with critics of the patriarchal, with critics (both female and male) of the misogynist, status quo.

While this will not endear him to the Establiment and its acolytes, nor to the so-called "alt-right" who mostly exemplify misogyny and whose adherents often trumpet the still patriarchal religion of Christianity as "the ethos of the West", Myatt scholarly cuts through their plebeian assumptions and Old World prejudices by providing an intellectual basis for a new, an enlightened, paganism firmly rooted in an understanding of our debt to Greco-Roman, pagan, culture.

A highly recommended book, and Kudos therefore to Myatt.

RS
December 2017 ev.

An Open Access gratis pdf copy of Myatt's book is available at:
https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf

Printed version: *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, 2017. ISBN 978-1982010935.

Part Two

Western Paganism And Hermeticism: Myatt And The Renaissance of Western Culture

Preface

Presented here are a selection of articles about Western paganism and hermeticism, indebted as those articles are to Myatt's translations of texts from the ancient Corpus Hermeticism {1} and his post-2013 writings such as his book *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, for Myatt's thesis in that book is that Western paganism is essentially the classical paganism of Ancient Greece and Rome and represents the ethos of the culture of the West, which ethos the Hebraic religion of Christianity supplanted. It is our view that those translations, the associated commentaries, and such books enable an insight into, and thus the evolution of, Western culture.

As mentioned in one of the articles included here, the ethos of the West

> "is the ethos, the pragmatic spirituality, and the notion of balance, harmony, elegance, and of beauty, which infuses the culture and the civilization of Ancient Greece and Rome, and which culture so enthused those Europeans – artists, scholars, educators, potentates, and others – who from the 14th century on brought about the Renaissance and which Renaissance, which re-discovery of the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, gave birth to and infused our Western 'Faustian' civilization."

However,

> "In respect of rediscovering the pagan spirituality of the West a fundamental problem has been a lack of knowledge among those interested in what, exactly, that spirituality is. A problem exacerbated by pre-existing translations of some of the ancient works knowledge of which is necessary in order to understand that spirituality. Works such as the Oedipus Tyrannus and the Antigone by Sophocles, the Agamemnon by Aeschylus, and the mystical texts of the Corpus Hermeticism."

Which is why the authors of the articles included in this compilation have studied Myatt's translations of classical and hermetic texts, for his translations

> "when studied together enable us to appreciate and understand the classical, pagan, ethos and thence the ethos of the West itself."

Since

> "what Myatt does in his translations [of the Corpus Hermeticum] is paint of picture of classical – and of Hellenic – culture and especially of Hellenic mysticism; a culture and a mysticism which is pagan and based on individuals, on tangible things such as honesty, and not on moralistic and religious and impersonal abstractions. That is, he reveals the Greco-Roman ethos – the pagan ethos – underlying the hermetic texts and which is in contrast to that of Christianity with its later, medieval and Puritanical, impersonal moralizing."

Hence this compilation, and the references therein to Myatt's *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, for in that work he provides examples from classical literature and from the Corpus Hermeticum of the difference between the pagan ethos of ancient Greece and Rome and the ethos of Christianity.

For context, we include as an appendix Myatt's essay *Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum*. The internet sources referenced in the articles were valid as of November 2017, and we have taken this opportunity to, with the consent of the authors, update several of their sources.

This third edition includes an additional article, *Suffering, Honour, And The Culture Of The West*, with all the included articles issued under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International license.

Rachael Stirling
Fourth Edition
July 2018 ev

{1} Myatt's translations of and commentaries on texts from the ancient Corpus Hermeticism are available both in print and as an open access gratis pdf document: (i) https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf and (ii) *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 190 pages. 2017, ISBN-13: 978-1976452369

Re-discovering Western Paganism

Whenever the term 'western paganism' is written or heard, in our contemporary societies, there is tendency for many readers or listeners to conjure up either images of ancient 'superstitious barbarians' offering sacrifices to various gods such as Odin, or images of modern devotees – of what has been termed 'contemporary paganism' and 'neopaganism' – in robes conducting or attending romanticized rituals and ceremonies such as those now associated with the Summer Solstice at Stonehenge.

In this essay, however, in referring to Western paganism we are referring to a particular and spiritual ethos – to a distinguishing character, or nature, or 'spirit' – germane to European lands and thus to 'the West', where by 'spiritual' is meant concerning what is considered to be, intuitively or otherwise, numinous, and/or concerning those forces or powers which are believed to be, or which may, determine our fate, wyrd, destiny and thus which may bring good fortune or misfortune to us, our family, and to our communities.

Hence, when writing about 'the West' we are not writing about the nations of the modern West and the life-styles and politics evident in such modern nations as the United States and Britain. What is meant is the culture and the civilization of and associated with European lands (and with what are now our former colonies or émigré lands) embodied and manifest as that culture and civilization was and is in the paganism of classical Greece and Rome; in the ritual practices and beliefs of North European lands such as Scandinavia and ancient Britain; in Greco-Roman art; in classical – and European folk – music; in the philosophy of the likes of Aristotle; in allegories such as those of Faust and myths such as King Arthur, Wotan, and the Valkyries; in the Greco-Roman mysticism of the Corpus Hermeticum, and in modern science and technology.

That is, we are writing about a particular culture of a particular people; of indigenous Europeans, among whose descendants are people of such lands as are now named Greece, Italy, Britain, Germany, Spain, France, Scandinavia, Poland, Russia, etcetera.

Part of this ancestral Western, this ancestral European, culture is a particular and spiritual ethos, and one which the term Western paganism correctly describes, with this particular paganism having its roots in Ancient Greece and Rome and thus being different, in ethos and in practise, from what is currently known concerning, for example, such religious practices and beliefs as that of ancient Germanic tribes. This 'Greco-Roman' paganism is the paganism of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero; a paganism that is pragmatically spiritual whose foundation is the rationalization that certain deeds were wise and certain other deeds unwise, with such unwise deeds – such hubris, ὕβρις – upsetting that natural balance of the Cosmos (κόσμος) and thus liable (according to ancestral tradition) to cause misfortune. Thus did Sophocles express a truth of this tradition when he wrote that "hubris is the genesis of tyrants" since tyrants invariably bring misfortune upon the people and, eventually, upon themselves and – quite often – on their descendants. In addition, and importantly, elegance, the beautiful (τὸ καλόν) as well as excellence (arête, ἀρετή) and nobility (τὸ ἀγαθόν) were all associated with those who did what was considered wise and balanced (μέσος, in Aristotle).

This is the ethos, the pragmatic spirituality, and the notion of balance, harmony, elegance, and of beauty, which infuses the culture and the civilization of Ancient Greece and Rome, and which culture so enthused those Europeans – artists, scholars, educators, potentates, and others – who from the 14th century on brought about the Renaissance and which Renaissance, which re-discovery of the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, gave birth to and infused our Western 'Faustian' civilization.

A Pagan Renaissance

This Renaissance, however, did not in any significant way include a practical return to classical paganism. Instead of giving rise to a new, an evolved, pagan ethos – and thus dispensing with the notion of anthropomorphic deities interfering in the lives of human beings – it resulted in only minor changes to the governing religious ethos manifest as that was in Christianity with its quite un-classical, rather stark, notions of Hell-Fire, Damnation, Sin, and Prudery. In other words, the governing spirituality continued to be Hebraic, derived from the Old Testament as amended by the 'new covenant' of Jesus of Nazareth.

While laudable, the attempt in recent times by some Europeans to rediscover the pagan ethos of their ancestors – exemplified in certain (but not all) neopagan groups and weltanschauungen – and thus distance themselves from Hebraic spirituality, is not and never can be, in our view, effective in reconnecting us to the ethos of the West for two reasons. First, because such attempts (at least so far) do not exemplify, do not manifest, the spiritual ethos of the West, founded as that is on the culture and spirituality of ancient Greece and Rome. Second, because they generally do not take into account how the ethos of the West has itself been distorted by a Hebraicism that is not only spiritual but is now, and has been for over a century, cultural.

This cultural Hebraicism is a mode of thinking and action in which Hebrews – ancient and modern – and their beliefs, and those of their followers and disciples, are taken as the type, the moral ideal, to be aspired to and lauded. In the case of ancient Hebrews and their beliefs, the type, the ideal is evident in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), and in latter-day interpretations of the Bible. In the case of modern Hebrews and their disciples, the type, the ideal, derives from (a) the dogma of 'equality of races' – ultimately derived from Marxism, sociology, and what has been termed 'social anthropology', with the belief being that all ethnicities have the same abilities, intelligence, potential, and human character – and from (b) the religious-like remembrance of and compulsory teaching regarding the Shoah, together with a hypocritical championing of ethnic awareness and ancestral traditions for all ethnicities except native European ('White') peoples, which ethnic awareness of, and its promotion among, native European peoples is

considered 'hatred', 'racist', 'extremist' and is increasing censored and outlawed in the lands of the West with the Hebraic reasoning being that such ethnic awareness of, and its promotion among, native European peoples gave rise to colonialism, to fascism and National Socialism and thus to the Shoah – which must "never be forgotten" – with no Western country ever allowed to again make ancestral European beliefs, and the Western ethos, the raison d'être of a nation-State.

In respect of rediscovering the pagan spirituality of the West a fundamental problem has been a lack of knowledge among those interested in what, exactly, that spirituality is. A problem exacerbated by pre-existing translations of some of the ancient works knowledge of which is necessary in order to understand that spirituality. Works such as the Oedipus Tyrannus and the Antigone by Sophocles, the Agamemnon by Aeschylus, and the mystical texts of the Corpus Hermeticism.

Which problem of translation is why, for example, the Antigone of Sophocles has become to be regarded (by all but a handful of scholars) as some kind of ancient morality tale or as just a drama about a conflict between two strong and different characters, Antigone and Creon; why Oedipus Tyrannus is regarded (by all but a handful of scholars) as a morality tale about "incest", and why the texts of the Corpus Hermeticism are regarded as imbued with a Christian-like mysticism and as having been influenced by both the Old and New Testaments.

Yet properly understood in the necessary cultural context, the Antigone, as one translator noted in the Introduction to his translation,

> "deals with the relation between mortals and gods. The work is an exploration and explanation of the workings of the cosmos, and the answers given express the distinctive ancient Greek 'outlook' or ethos. This ethos is pagan, and its essence may be said to be that there are limits to human behaviour; that some conduct is wise, some conduct is unwise. Unwise conduct invites retribution by the gods: it can and often does result in personal misfortune, in bad luck." {1}

Ditto in respect of the Oedipus Tyrannus, and the Agamemnon of Aeschylus. Regarding the Corpus Hermeticism, as we have previously mentioned, certain new translations restore

> "these texts to the Western pagan tradition and make them relevant to our times when Western culture and our classical, Greco-Roman, and pagan heritage is increasingly subsumed in schools and elsewhere by other, non-Western, cultures and religions, with it now being politically incorrect to point out that Western culture with its Greco-Roman pagan heritage has profoundly changed the world for the better and is arguably superior to all other cultures past and present." {2}

That is, translations of important classical texts are now available which, when studied together, enable us to appreciate and understand the classical, pagan, ethos and thence the ethos of the West itself. {3}

Which understanding might – probably should – lead us, or someone, to develop a new, an evolved, pagan weltanschauung which does not involve anthropomorphic deities but instead is based on a new ontology regarding our relation, as sentient beings, to Being, to the Cosmos, rather than to 'God' or to some 'gods'. Something perhaps prefigured in Greek texts such as these with their reasoned, pragmatic, and often quite warrior-like, spirituality:

> The Muse shall tell of the many adventures of that man of the many stratagems
> Who, after the pillage of that hallowed citadel at Troy,
> Saw the towns of many a people and experienced their ways:
> He whose vigour, at sea, was weakened by many afflictions
> As he strove to win life for himself and return his comrades to their homes.
> But not even he, for all this yearning, could save those comrades
> For they were destroyed by their own immature foolishness
> Having devoured the cattle of Helios, that son of Hyperion,
> Who plucked from them the day of their returning. {4}
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> You should listen to [the goddess] Fairness and not oblige Hubris
> Since Hubris harms unfortunate mortals while even the more fortunate
> Are not equal to carrying that heavy a burden, meeting as they do with Mischief.
> The best path to take is the opposite one: that of honour
> For, in the end, Fairness is above Hubris
> Which is something the young come to learn from adversity. {5}
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> This person, whom I praise, never ceased to believe that the gods delight in respectful deeds just as much as in consecrated temples, and, when blessed with success, he was never prideful but rather gave thanks to the gods. He also made more offerings to them when he was confident than supplications when he felt hesitant, and, in appearance, it was his habit to be cheerful when doubtful and mild-mannered when successful. {6}
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>
> Clytaemnestra:
>
> Because of these grievous things, no one should invoke a fatal curse upon
> Nor turn their wroth toward, Helen

As if she was some man-killer who alone destroyed
The lives of those many Danaan men
By having wrought such a festering wound […]

The wife of this corpse presents herself here
As that most ancient fierce Avenger.
It is Atreus, he is of that cruel feast,
Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims
This adult one […]

But do not suppose that his killing was ignoble
For did he not by his cunning set Misfortune upon this family? {7}

°°°°°

Creon:

So even then you dared to violate these laws?

Antigone:

It was not Zeus who proclaimed them to me,
Nor did she who dwells with the gods below – the goddess, Judgement –
Lay down for us mortals such laws as those.
Neither did I suppose that your edicts
Had so much strength that you, who die,
Could out-run the unwritten and unchanging
Customs of the gods: for the life of these things
Is not only of yesterday or today, but eternal,
No one remembering their birth. {8}

All of which explains why we love to also quote what a certain English poet wrote in 1873 CE: "the separation between the Greeks and us is due principally to the Hebraistic culture we receive in childhood." All those tall tales from the Bible about various Hebrew folk…

Rachael & Richard Stirling
Shropshire
Autumnal Equinox 2017 ev

°°°°°

{1} Antigone. Translated by David Myatt.

{2} Refer to the article *An Insight Into Pagan Mysticism*, included here.

{3} These translations – dating from between 1991 and 2017, and all of which are independent of his own mystical – if pagan – 'philosophy of pathei-mathos' – are by David Myatt, and include the following important classical texts:

° The Agamemnon of Aeschylus. International Standard Book Number: 978-1484128220

° Sophocles – Oedipus Tyrannus. International Standard Book Number: 978-1484132104

° Sophocles – Antigone. International Standard Book Number: 978-1484132067

° Homer – The Odyssey: Books 1, 2 & 3. International Standard Book Number: 978-1495402227

° Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates. A compilation containing translations of and commentaries on tractates I, III, IV, VI, VIII, XI, XII, XII. International Standard Book Number: 978-1976452369.

The commentaries on the tractates are of especial interest in elucidating the paganism of the texts.

His Greek translations are available both as printed books and as gratis open access (pdf) files here: https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/greek-translations/

{4} The Odyssey. Translated Myatt.

{5} Hesiod. Translated Myatt, and quoted (with the Greek text) in his commentary on Tractate III.

{6} Xenophon. Translated Myatt, and quoted (with the Greek text) in his commentary on Tractate I.

{7} Agamemnon. Translated Myatt.

{8} Antigone. Translated Myatt.

An Insight Into Pagan Mysticism

In an article, published on his blog on March 2017 and dealing as it does with the ancient texts of the Corpus Hermeticum {1}, David Myatt expounds on his decision to translate the ancient Greek term ἀγαθός not by the conventional English term 'good' but by – according to context – honourable, noble, nobility. In support of his translation of ἀγαθός he quotes Seneca: "summum bonum est quod honestum est. Et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt." {2}

This choice – and his unconventional translations of other particular ancient Greek words such as νοῦς – really does give, as he notes in his article, an "impression about ancient Hermeticism which is rather different from that conveyed by other translations."

The difference, as other commentators on Myatt's Hermetica translations have noted {3} and as Myatt shows in his article, is between taking those texts as expressing a Christian ethos and taking them as expressing a pagan – a classical, Greco-Roman – ethos.

For those interested in Western esotericism in general and Hermeticism in particular this is a profound and important difference. It restores these texts to the Western pagan tradition and makes them relevant to our times when Western culture and our classical, Greco-Roman, and pagan heritage is increasingly subsumed in schools and elsewhere by other, non-Western, cultures and religions, with it now being 'politically incorrect' to point out that Western culture with its Greco-Roman pagan heritage has profoundly changed the world for the better and is arguably superior to all other cultures past and present.

Although Myatt in his article provides three illuminating examples of the difference between his 'pagan' (authentic) versions and the 'Christian' interpolations of other translators, I will provide two other examples.

The first is from tract XI which Myatt entitles *From Perceiverance To Hermes*.

> "Indulging the body and rotten, you are unable to apprehend the beautiful, the noble. To be completely rotten is to be unaware of the numinous, while having the ability to discover, to have volition, to have expectations, is the direct, the better – its own – way to nobility."

Copenhaver, hitherto extolled as providing the 'definitive translation', has:

> "While you are evil and a lover of the body, you can understand none of the things that are beautiful and good. To be ignorant of the divine is the ultimate vice, but to be able to know, to will and to hope is the straight and easy way leading to the good." {4}

The second example is from tract IV, which Myatt entitles *Chaldron Or Monas*.

> Since that Being is honourable, the desire was to entrust solely to that Being such a cosmic order on Earth […] What is apparent can please us while what is concealed can cause doubt with what is bad often overt while the honourable is often concealed having as it has neither pattern nor guise.

Copenhaver translates as:

> "Because he is good it was not for himself alone that he wished to make this offering and adorn this earth […] Visible things delight us but the invisible causes mistrust. Bad things are more open to sight but the good is invisible to what can be seen. For the good has neither shape nor outline."

It is easy to see which translation echoes a pagan ethos – as the likes of Seneca and Cicero understood classical paganism – and which is redolent of a Christian or a pseudo-Christian ethos.

In summary, Myatt in his translations of eight of the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum provides the ordinary reader with an insight into a neglected Western mystic tradition. A neglected tradition because all the other translations available impart – in Myatt's words – "the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity."

Richard Stirling
Shropshire
2017

{1} https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/03/24/concerning-ἀγαθός-and-νοῦς-in-the-corpus-hermeticum/
{2} Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4.
{3} Refer to *Myatt's Monas - A New Translation of Corpus Hermeticum IV,* included below.
{4} B. Copenhaver. Hermetica. Cambridge University Press. 1992

Regarding Myatt's Hermetica

In the Spring of this year (2017) David Myatt released his versions – translations and commentaries – of several more Corpus Hermeticum texts to complement his existing, published, versions of tracts I, III, IV, VIII, XI {1}. The new

additions were tracts VI, XII, and the Cantio Arcana part (sections 17 and 18) of tract XIII.

The latest additions – bringing his translations of Hermetica texts to eight – follow the same methodology as previous versions. That is, his penchant for transliterating certain Greek words, his use of often unusual English words in place of the standard translations and meanings given in Greek-English lexicons such as LSJ {2}, and the terms and expressions he invents or digs up from usually very old books of English literature. All of which combine to make his translations idiosyncratic and remarkably different from all previous translations into English, antique and modern. To his credit, he explains in his commentary – sometimes in pedantic detail – his choices, citing his reasons and often providing some quotation in Greek, Latin, or English.

In regard to his translations of hermetic texts, this results in two things. In translations with a technical vocabulary relating to hermeticism, and in translations which transports the reader to an ancient world. Both of these combine to breathe new life into the texts and thence into hermeticism itself. Thus, far from, as Myatt writes in his introduction to tract VI, giving the impression "of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity," the hermetic texts he has translated give the impression of reading about a pagan mysticism that most readers will probably be unfamiliar with.

Thus while other translators write moralistically about god, righteousness, truth, and 'the good', Myatt previews a world of divinities, of respecting the customs of the gods, of honesty, and nobility. A good example of the difference is in Myatt's rendering of part of the Cantio Arcana. Copenhaver – who follows the proto-Christian interpretation of earlier translators and whose recent translations of the Corpus Hermeticum are regarded as "the definitive versions", has:

> "Holy knowledge, you enlightened me; through you, hymning the intellectual light, I take joy in the joy of Mind. Join me, all you powers, and sing me the hymn. You also, continence, sing me the hymn. My justice, through me hymn the just. My liberality, through me hymn the Universe. Truth, hymn the truth. Good, hymn the good." (3}

Myatt has:

> Numinous knowledge, from you a numinal understanding:
> Through you, a song of apprehended phaos,
> Delighted with delightful perceiverance.
> Join me, all you Arts, in song.
> You, mastery, sing; and you, respectful of custom,
> Through me sing of such respect.
> Sing, my companions, for All That Exists:
> Honesty, through me, sing of being honest,
> The noble, sing of nobility.

In Myatt's version there are the two previously mentioned things. A technical vocabulary – such as numinal, phaos, perceiverance, Arts – requiring interpretation, and nothing reminiscent of Christianity, such as 'hymn' and 'holy' and being 'good'. As Myatt writes in his commentary on the Cantio Arcana in respect of his use of the terms song, honesty and Arts:

> Song. ὕμνος. Not a 'hymn' in the Christian sense (which the word hymn now so often imputes) but rather celebrating the numinous, and theos, in song, verse (ode), and chant.
>
> Honesty. ἀλήθεια. Given that those who are urged to sing are personifications, this is not some abstract, disputable, 'truth' but as often elsewhere in classical literature, a revealing, a dis-covering, of what is real as opposed to what is apparent or outer appearance. In personal terms, being honest and truthful.
>
> Arts. As at Poemandres 31 – which is also a traditional doxology (δοξολογία) to theos – the sense of δυνάμεων [here] is not 'powers', forces (or something similar and equally at variance with such a laudation) but 'arts'; that is, particular abilities, qualities, and skills. Here, these abilities and skills – the craft – relate to esoteric song; to be able to be an effective laudator in respect of theos and "every Physis of Kosmos."

His reference to 'every Physis of Kosmos' is to the beginning of the ode:

> Let every Physis of Kosmos favourably listen to this song
> πᾶσα φύσις κόσμου προσδεχέσθω τοῦ ὕμνου τὴν ἀκοήν

which Copenhaver translates as "let every nature in the cosmos attend to the hearing of this hymn."

The commentaries which accompany the translations deserve a mention. Each of them not only occupies far more pages than the actual translation but they reveal the author as erudite with pages of quotations from ancient Greek and Latin works – for most of which Myatt provides his own translation – and the occasional quotation from English literature. In the case of English literature usually to explain the meaning of the unusual English words of phrases he uses, quoting the likes of Chaucer, Coleridge, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Chapman, and others.

In effect what Myatt does in his translations is paint of picture of classical – and of Hellenic – culture and especially of Hellenic mysticism; a culture and a mysticism which is pagan and based on individuals, on tangible things such as honesty, and not on moralistic and religious and impersonal abstractions. That is, he reveals the Greco-Roman ethos – the pagan ethos – underlying the hermetic texts and which is in contrast to that of Christianity with its later, medieval and Puritanical, impersonal moralizing. He incidently leaves us with an interesting question. Which is whether such pagan Hellenic mysticism influenced Christianity in a positive way. In academia the assumption has always been that Christianity and earlier Judaic monotheism influenced hermeticism despite the fact of evidence from papyrus

fragments indicating the opposite and despite the fact that the earliest texts of the Old Testament were written in Greek and not in Hebrew. {4}

Myatt himself is of the opinion that parts of ancient Greek mysticism and cosmogony – as described for instance in tract III of the Corpus Hermeticum – have influenced both Judaism and Christianity. {5}

Such controversial matters aside, his translations of tracts from the Corpus Hermeticism are decidedly iconoclastic and – when compared to those of other translators such as Copenhaver – idiosyncratic and as such are not and probably never will be mainstream at least in academia. They may therefore never gain widespread acceptance among established academics. Does that matter? Probably not because his actual and potential audience is much greater. Which audience is of those interested in Western mysticism, in Western paganism, and in Greco-Roman culture in general, and for such interested parties Myatt has done a great service since he places the hermetic texts firmly into those milieux.

One other thing about the translations and commentaries deserves a mention. As well a being available in printed form he has not only made all of them available as free downloads from the internet {6} but also issued them under a liberal Creative Commons license which allows others to freely copy and distribute them.

Rachael Stirling
Shropshire
May 2017

{1} D. Myatt. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 2017, ISBN-13: 978-1976452369
{2} H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
{3} B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992.
{4} The earliest written texts of the Old Testament – papyrus fragments found in Egypt – are in Hellenistic Greek and date from around 250 BCE and precede by over a century the earliest fragments written in Hebrew (some of the Dead Sea Scrolls) which date from 150 BCE to around 50 BCE.
{5} See Myatt's introduction to his translation of tract III.
{6} https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/corpus-hermeticum/

The Divine Pymander

In July of this year (2013) David Myatt issued the first pre-publication draft of his complete translation of and commentary on the Pymander section of the Corpus Hermeticum – 'The Divine Pymander' {1}. The work, translated from the ancient Greek, is also available as a book – International Standard Book Number 978-1495470684.

The Divine Pymander is one of the standard Hermetic and Gnostic texts, outlining as it does Hermetic philosophy, and, in Mead's 1906 translation, has been used by the Theosophical Society and occult groups such as The Hermetic Order of The Golden Dawn, who weaved part of it into an occult ritual. The text was also used, again in translation, by the British occultist Aleister Crowley, as part of a conjuration involving 'the holy guardian angel'.

Myatt's translation differs in almost every respect from the other translations available, the most scholarly of which is probably that of Copenhaver published in 1992 {2}. One of the obvious differences is Myatt's use, in his translation, of particular transliterations, especially his use of 'theos' instead of 'god', logos instead of 'Word', and 'physis' instead of 'nature', the later of which is an important principle in Myatt's own and somewhat gnostic philosophy of pathei-mathos. Another difference is his translation of certain Greek terms, translations which he himself in his Introduction describes as idiosyncratic, although I would go so far as to say they are iconoclastic. For instance, he translates 'agios' not as the conventional 'holy' but as 'numinous', explaining his reasons in a long note in his commentary, writing that,

> "Correctly understood, numinous is the unity beyond our perception of its two apparent aspects; aspects expressed by the Greek usage of *ἅγιος* which could be understood in a good (light) way as 'sacred', revered, of astonishing beauty; and in a bad (dark) way as redolent of the gods/wyrd/the fates/morai in these sense of the retributive or (more often) their balancing power/powers and thus giving rise to mortal 'awe' since such a restoration of the natural balance often involved or required the death (and sometimes the 'sacrifice') of mortals. It is the numinous – in its apparent duality, and as a manifestation of a restoration of the natural, divine, balance – which is evident in much of Greek tragedy, from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (and the Orestia in general) to the Antigone and the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles." David Myatt – *Mercvrii Trismegisti Pymander de potestate et sapientia dei: A Translation and Commentary* (2013)

Other differences include Myatt's use of obscure English words, such as artisements – all of which he explains in his commentary – and his coining of unusual and striking terms to translate an important Greek expression, such as 'quidditas of semblance' for what is usually translated (both by Mead and Copenhaver) as 'archetype of form', with Myatt writing in his commentary that,

> "The transliteration 'archetype' here is, unfortunately, unsuitable, given what the term archetype now suggests and implies (vide Jungian psychology, for example) beyond what the Greek of the text means. Appropriate words or terms such as 'primal-pattern' or 'protoform' are awkward, clumsy. Hence quidditas

(11th/12th century Latin), from whence came 'quiddity', a term originally from medieval scholasticism which was then used to mean the natural (primal) nature or form of some-thing, and thus hints at the original sense of ἀρχέτυπον."

A Greek Not Christian Text

All these differences give a decidedly different tone to the work. So much so that Myatt's translation comes across as a decidedly Greek, almost pagan, work about metaphysics in contrast to the other available translations which make it appear to be if not some sort of early Christian text then a text heavily influenced by and expressing Christian ideas. Part of this is down to what many will undoubtedly see as Myatt's controversial choice of English words, a choice which he often explains in his commentary as avoiding imposing "after nearly two thousand years of scriptural exegesis and preaching, various religious preconceptions on the text".

Two sets of quotations from four different translations should illustrate this. The first set is from the very end of the text.

The 17th century Everard translation:

> Holy is God the Father of All Things.
> Holy is God Whose Will is Performed and Accomplished by His Own Powers.
> Holy is God, that Determineth to be Known, and is Known of His Own, or Those that are His.
> Holy art Thou, that by Thy Word hast established all Things.

The 1906 Mead translation:

> Holy are you, O God, the universals' Father.
> Holy are you, O God, whose Will perfects itself by means of its own Powers.
> Holy are you, O God, who willeth to be known and art known by your own.
> Holy are you,who did you by Word make to consist the things that are.

The 1992 Copenhaver translation:

> Holy is god, the father of all.
> Holy is god, whose counsel is done by his own powers.
> Holy is god, whom wishes to be known and is known by his own people.
> Holy are you, who by the word have constituted all things that are.

The 2013 Myatt translation:

> Agios o Theos, father of all beings.
> Agios o Theos, whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts.
> Agios o Theos, whose disposition is to be recognized and who is recognized by his own.
> Agios es, you who by logos form all being.

It should be explained that Myatt in his commentary writes,

> "I have given, as an intimation, a transliteration of the first part, as these are doxologies, similar to the Kyrie eleison [Κύριε ἐλέησον], and much (if not all) of their numinous/sacred/mystical/esoteric quality and meaning are lost when they are translated into plain – or into archaic, KJV type – English. Although they are best read/recited in the original Greek, the Latin preserves much of the numinosity of these and other such doxologies [….] ἅγιος ὁ approximates to 'Numinous is' [theos]."

Myatt then proceeds to give the Latin translation of the Greek.

The second set of quotations are from the middle of the text.

The 17th century Everard translation:

> "Hear now the rest of that speech, thou so much desirest to hear. When that Period was fulfilled, the bond of all things was loosed and untied by the Will of God; for all living Creatures being Hermaphroditical, or Male and Female, were loosed and untied together with Man; and so the Males were apart by themselves and the Females likewise. And straightway God said to the Holy Word,. Increase in Increasing, and Multiply in Multitude all you my Creatures and Workmanships. And let Him that is endued with Mind, know Himself to be Immortal; and that the cause of Death is the Love of the Body"

The 1906 Mead translation:

> "Now listen to the rest of the discourse which you dost long to hear. The period being ended, the bond that bound them all was loosened by God's Will. For all the animals being male-female, at the same time with Man were loosed apart; some became partly male, some in like fashion [partly] female. And straightway God spake by His Holy Word: Increase ye in increasing, and multiply in multitude, ye creatures and creations all; and man that hath Mind in him, let him learn to know that he himself is deathless, and that the cause of death is love."

The 1992 Copenhaver translation:

> "Hear the rest, the word you yearn to hear. When the cycle was completed, the bond among all things was sundered by the counsel of god. All livings things, which had been androgyne, were sundered into two parts – humans along with them – and part of them became male, part likewise female. But god immediately spoke a holy speech: 'Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, all you creatures and craftworks, and let him (who) is mindful recognize that he is immortal, that desire is the cause of death."

The 2013 Myatt translation:

> "Now listen to the rest of the explanation you asked to hear. When the cycle was fulfilled, the connexions between all things were, by the deliberations of theos, unfastened. Living beings – all male-and-female then – were, including humans, rent asunder thus bringing into being portions that were masculous with the others muliebral. Directly, then, theos spoke a numinous logos: propagate by propagation and spawn by spawning, all you creations and artisements, and let the perceiver have the knowledge of being deathless and of Eros as responsible for death."

The Septenary System

While Myatt's commentary is often dense and sometimes obscure, it is notable for two reasons.

First, its scholarly nature, for his quotations, in the commentary and in Greek or Latin and with his own translations, range from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, to Sophocles, to Xenophon, to Cicero and the New Testament, and include what to most people will be obscure works from the 'fathers of the Christian church', including Maximus the Confessor, Irenaeus, and Cyril of Alexandria. Occasional gems are to be found, such as Myatt's translation from the Greek of a passage from the *Discourses* of Epictetus:

> "Neither a tyrannos nor some Lord shall negate my intent; nor some crowd although I be just one; nor someone stronger although I be weaker, since such unhindrance is a gift, to everyone, from theos."

Second, and of interest to many, the commentary explains much about not only 'the septenary system' – the hebdomad – which forms an important part of the hermetic Pymander text, but also about the 'anados', the journey through the spheres to the final goal of immortality. There are esoteric gems aplenty here, and it is worth ploughing through the commentary just to find these. For example, in a comment on part 26 of the Pymander text, Myatt writes,

> " [It is] easy to understand why some considered there were, or represented their understanding/insight by, 'nine' (seven plus two) fundamental cosmic emanations, or by nine realms or spheres [qv. the quote from Cicero in section 17] – the seven of the hebdomad, plus the one of the 'ogdoadic physis' mentioned here, plus the one (also mentioned here) of what is beyond even this 'ogdoadic physis'. However, as this text describes, there are seven realms or spheres – a seven-fold path to immortality, accessible to living mortals – and then two types of existence (not spheres) beyond these, accessible only after the mortals has journeyed along that path and then, having 'offered up' certain things along the way (their mortal ethos), 'handed over their body to its death'. Ontologically, therefore, the seven might somewhat simplistically be described as partaking of what is 'causal' (of what is mortal) and the two types of existence beyond the seven as partaking of – as being – 'acausal' (of what is immortal). Thus, Pœmandres goes on to say, the former mortal – now immortal – moves on (from this first type of 'acausal existence') to become these forces (beyond the ogdoadic physis) to thus finally 'unite with theos': αὐτοὶ εἰς δυνάμεις ἑαυ τοὺς παραδιδόασι καὶ δυνάμεις γενόμενοι ἐν θεῷ γίνονται."

An Iconoclastic Work

Although already known as "a British iconoclast" {3} for his strange and past involvements and peregrinations, as well as known for his idiosyncratic translations of Sappho and Heraclitus, David Myatt's translation of and commentary on 'The Divine Pymander' will undoubtedly confirm that iconoclasm and that idiosyncrasy.

His translation is most decidedly iconoclastic, bringing as it does a new insight into the text, and breathing as it does new life into its hermeticism, thus making it far more accessible to, and understandable, by students of gnosticism, hermeticism, and the occult; and although – given Myatt's (not always deserved) reputation, and his past involvements and peregrinations – it will undoubtedly be ignored by the academic establishment, its appeal will be to such students and to others interested in the arcane. It also serves to compliment Myatt's own philosophy of pathei-mathos, elucidating as it does some of the more obscure points of Myatt's ontological speculations.

R. Parker
July 2013

{1} Myatt's translation and commentary is included his book *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. International Standard Book Number 978-1976452369.

{2} Copenhaver, B. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. There is a major issue with Copenhaver's book in that in his notes he gives not the actual Greek text (using the Greek character set) but transliterations (using the Latin character set) which is annoying for those who can read Greek. Myatt in his notes and commentary, and to his credit,

eschews this 'populist', dumbing-down, approach, and – in accord with hundreds of years of scholarship – provides the Greek text.

{3} Jon B. Perdue: *The War of All the People: The Nexus of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism*. Potomac Books, 2012. p.70

Myatt's Monas
A New Translation of Corpus Hermeticum IV

David Myatt's translation of and commentary on the fourth tract of the Corpus Hermeticum {1} continues the style of his two previous translations of Hermetic texts: transliterations of some Greek words (such as logos and theos) and not giving some other Greek words (such as κακός and μῖσος) there usual meanings such as are found, for instance, in the standard Greek-English Lexicon of Liddell, Scott, and Jones {2}. As with his other Hermetic translations this results in Myatt's version reading like an ancient pagan text rather than one infused with Christian or ascetic ideas, as the following examples illustrate.

The 1906 Mead translation:

> Unless thou first shalt hate thy Body, son, thou canst not love thy Self. But if thou lovest thy Self thou shalt have Mind, and having Mind thou shalt share in the Gnosis.

The 1992 Copenhaver translation, which is quite similar to Mead's:

> Unless you first hate your body, my child, you cannot love yourself, but when you have loved yourself, you will possess mind, and if you have mind, you will also have a share in the way to learn.

The 2016 Myatt translation:

My son, primarily, unless you have a prejudice about the body
You cannot have affection for yourself, and when you have affection for yourself
You can acquire perceiverance and, having perceiverance,
You can participate in episteme.

Regarding episteme, Myatt writes in his commentary:

> A transliteration of ἐπιστήμη, which could be – and has been – accented thus: épistémé. The meaning is 'a way', or a means or a method, by which something can be known, understood, and appreciated. In this case, perceiveration, which the artisan-creator has positioned "half-way between psyches, as a reward." Episteme, therefore, should be considered a technical, esoteric, term associated with some of the weltanschauungen that are described in the Corpus Hermeticum. Thus, in the Poemandres tractate, the anados through the seven spheres is an episteme.

A Contentious Choice

One of the most contentious aspects of Myatt approach is his view, described in his Introduction, of the relation of the text to ancient Egyptian beliefs; of the texts being in essence representative of the Greek world-view with only few passing Egyptian references such as using the name Thoth.

While this is also the view of the Dominican priest André-Jean Festugière – the Greek scholar who with Professor Arthur Nock edited the standard edition of the text used by Myatt and others – many modern scholars have veered toward the view of there being some Egyptian, and probably Christian, influence.

The other contentious aspect is how Myatt, in this tractate, defines ἀγαθός. As 'honourable' instead of the more usual 'good'. In defence of his choice he quotes a passage, in Greek, from the Corpus Aristotelicum and provides his own translation, arguing that this expresses the pagan Greek view and is apposite given what the English term good often implies due to the legacy of Christianity.

Myatt's choice here completely changes the tone of the whole work, as evident in the following passage:

The 1906 Mead translation:

> But they who have received some portion of God's gift, these, Tat, if we judge by their deeds, have from Death's bonds won their release; for they embrace in their own Mind all things, things on the earth, things in the heaven, and things above the heaven,—if there be aught. And having raised themselves so far they sight the Good; and having sighted It, they look upon their sojourn here as a mischance; and in disdain of all, both things in body and the bodiless, they speed their way unto that One and Only One.

The 1992 Copenhaver translation:

> But those who participate in the gift that comes from god, O Tat, are immortal rather than mortal if one compares their deeds, for in a mind of their own they have comprehended all things on earth, things in heaven and even what lies beyond heaven. Having raised

> themselves so far, they have seen the good and, having seen it, they have come to regard the wasting of time here below as a calamity. They have scorned every corporeal and incorporeal thing, and they hasten toward the one and only.

The 2016 Myatt translation:

> And yet, Thoth, those who parten to that gift from theos become,
> When set against their deeds, immortal instead of mortal
> For they with their perceiverance apprehend the Earthly, the Heavenly,
> And what is beyond the Heavens.
> Having gone so far, they perceive what is honourable, and, having so perceived,
> They regard what preceded this as a delay, as a problem
> And, with little regard for whatever is embodied and disembodied,
> They strive toward the Monas.

Also notable here is Myatt's choice of Thoth for Τάτ, and Monas for μονάς. Certainly the choice of Tat by both Mead and Copenhaver is unfortunate given what 'tat' means in British English.

Conclusion

Once again Myatt has provided a refreshingly different translation of an important Hermetic text, and one which as with his previous translations of tracts I and III {3} both reads well and offers a different, if iconoclastic and controversial, interpretation most suitable to students of Hermeticism and – perhaps especially – to students of the Occult given how such hermetic texts formed and form one of the foundations of Western Occultism, both during the Renaissance and in our modern times.

R. Parker
July 2016

{1} Included in Myatt's *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. International Standard Book Number 978-1976452369

{2} Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996. International Standard Book Number 9780198642268.

{3} His previous Hermetica translations included the Poemandres and the Ιερός Λόγος tracts.

On Native Egyptian Influence In The Corpus Hermeticum

For nearly a hundred years, from Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* published in 1904, to Fowden's *The Egyptian Hermes* published in 1986, the question of Egyptian influence on the fourteen Greek texts – tractates {1} – collectively known as the Corpus Hermeticum has been much debated. The opinions of scholars, and of translators, have ranged from little influence (Festugiere) to insignificant influence (Myatt), to much influence (Mahé), to the more recent one (Fowden) of hermeticism being syncretic, combining elements of Hellenic culture with elements of Egyptian culture in various and still disputable proportions.

What, however, is often not explicitly defined is what 'Egyptian', and Egyptian culture, mean in the context of where and when the Greek texts of the Corpus Hermeticum were written; which was, to give the widest parameters, sometime between the end of the first century CE and the end of the third century CE when Egypt was a province of the Roman Empire and where cities like Alexandria were places where Hellenic culture thrived and where people of Greek and of Roman descent lived in large numbers, some of whom no doubt had an interest in and knowledge of native Egyptian – 'Pharaonic' – culture and history. For centuries before that, most of Egypt had – following the conquests of Alexander the Great – been a Greek colony ruled by a succession of people of Greek origin such as the Macedonian Ptolemaios Soter who established what became known as the Ptolemaic dynasty (or Kingdom) whose last ruler was Cleopatra, herself of Greek origin, who desired that the native Egyptians of her time consider her as an embodiment of their native goddess Isis.

Thus for some three centuries before the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum were written Egypt was a thriving outpost of Greek culture; a place where the likes of Aristotle and Archimedes lived and flourished for many years.

It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between the ruling, Greek, elite – and the Greek aristocracy of people such as Aristotle and Archimedes – and native Egyptians; a cultural and an ancestral distinction. A relevant comparison is the British Raj in India who were British by heritage and culture and who, even if they were born and spent most of their life in India, could not – should not – be described as 'Indian'.

Considered thus the relevant context of the Greek texts of the Corpus Hermeticum was the centuries-long Greek culture of such an aristocracy combined with the relatively recent culture of Rome from the time of Caesar to praefectus Statilius Aemilianus (270 CE). What is not particularly relevant is the culture of the natives, the ancestors of the *fellaheen*, some or many of whom no doubt continued to revere or at least remember the divinities of ancient Egypt such as the goddess Isis and most of whom would not have been able to read let alone write Greek.

Given the centuries-long Greek and Roman heritage of the ruling elite and the aristocracy – who could speak and read Greek and who were probably acquainted with the writings of Plato and Aristotle – and given why rulers such as

Cleopatra desired, for the benefit of her subjects, to be identified with an ancient Egyptian divinity such as Isis, it is most probable that the authors of the Greek texts of the Corpus Hermeticum, resident as they were in the then Roman province of Egypt, sought to give their metaphysical speculations some local, Egyptian, colour by – among other things – naming the son (or the pupil) of the Greek Hermes after the Egyptian god Thoth.

As Myatt noted in the introduction to his translation of tractate IV of the Corpus Hermeticum:

> "In respect of Τάτ, while there is no disputing that Thoth is meant, what may or may not be implied by the name Thoth is whether or not there is a primarily Egyptian genesis for the metaphysics and the cosmogony of this particular tractate. For what does 'Egyptian' mean in the context of the Corpus Hermeticum, written when Egypt was a post-Ptolemaic Roman province where Hellenism still thrived? That is, is the text propounding a metaphysics and a cosmogony primarily redolent of indigenous, pre-Alexandrian, times, with Hermes Trismegistus simply a Hellenic name for the ancient Dynastic deity Thoth, and thus with the Greek Hermes possibly being a son of that ancient Egyptian deity? Or is the text redolent of a classical metaphysics and a cosmogony; or of a Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony; or of some syncretism of Egyptian (pre-Alexandrian) weltanschauungen with Hellenic mysticism? Or has the author (or authors) of Ἑρμοῦ πρὸς Τάτ ὁ κρατῆρ ἡ μονάς simply used the name of an ancient deity – Thoth – in order to appeal to an audience of Hellenized Egyptians, or Greeks/Romans dwelling in Egypt, or because it seemed to add some esoteric gravitas to the text? Or, as the title might be taken to imply – of Hermes to Thoth – is it a text intended to inform Egyptians (Hellenized or expatriate Greeks/Romans, or otherwise) about Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, with Thoth thus regarded, symbolically, esoterically, or otherwise, as the son of the Greek divinity Hermes?
>
> In this matter, I incline toward the view – based on some forty years of study of the Corpus Hermeticum and similar mystical and esoteric texts, classical, Hellenic, medieval, Arabic and otherwise – that what is imparted in this tractate, as with the Poemandres and Ιερός Λόγος, is primarily a mystical, and – for centuries – aural, Greek tradition, albeit one possibly influenced, over time and in some degree, by the metaphysical speculations of later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle."

I therefore find myself in agreement with Myatt regarding the question of native Egyptian influence on those texts. That the texts present us with a Greek/Hellenic metaphysics and cosmogony, not with some Greek and Egyptian syncretion, and certainly not with a native Egyptian metaphysics and cosmogony slightly influenced by Hellenism.

For it is essentially a question of terminology: of what 'Egyptian' means in cultural and in ancestral terms. Of a perhaps an inhibition on the part of some modern scholars to differentiate between the ancestry and the culture of 'the natives' and the ancestry and culture of a ruling elite and aristocracy.

R. Parker
2017

{1} Tractate is derived from the classical Latin *tractatus* meaning a discussion, 'concerning', a treatise; and was used by writers such as Cicero and Pliny. It was later assimilated into ecclesiastical Latin – qv. Augustine – where it denoted a homily or sermon. It is the basis of the modern English word *tract*.

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Suffering, Honour, And The Culture Of The West

A theme of David Myatt's post-2011 writings – and of his philosophy of pathei-mathos {1} – is the question of human-caused suffering leading him to ask whether we humans have changed significantly, en masse, such that such suffering is less now than in the past three to four thousand years. Which question led him to write

> "if we do not or cannot learn from our human culture of pathei-mathos, from the many thousands of years of such suffering as that culture documents and presents and remembers; if we no longer concern ourselves with *de studiis humanitatis ac litterarum*, then do we as a sentient species deserve to survive?" {2}

A century after the mechanized slaughter of the First World War which killed millions of people and injured millions

more, and seventy-three years after the slaughter and suffering of millions more people in the Second World War, human-caused suffering continues around the world. War and armed conflict and destruction in the Middle East and Africa and elsewhere. Terrorist attacks in Europe, America, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and elsewhere. Meanwhile humans, individually and in small groups, continue to kill, rape, and be brutal and violent and oppressive toward and injure and cause suffering to other human beings in hundreds of thousands of attacks every year all around the world.

As Myatt wrote in respect of the suffering caused by war and armed conflict,

> "it is as if we, as a sentient species, have learnt nothing from the past four thousand years. Nothing from the accumulated pathei-mathos of those who did such deeds or who experienced such deeds or who suffered because of such deeds. Learnt nothing from four thousand years of the human culture that such pathei-mathos created and which to us is manifest – remembered, celebrated, transcribed – in Art, literature, memoirs, music, poetry, myths, legends, and often in the ethos of a numinous ancestral awareness or in those sometimes mystical allegories that formed the basis for a spiritual way of life.
>
> All we have done is to either (i) change the names of that which or those whom we are loyal to and for which or for whom we fight, kill, and are prepared to die for, or (ii) given names to such new causes as we have invented in order to give us some identity or some excuse to fight, endure, triumph, preen, or die for. Pharaoh, Caesar, Pope, Defender of the Faith, President, General, Prime Minister; Rome, Motherland, Fatherland, The British Empire, Our Great Nation, North, South, our democratic way of life. It makes little difference; the same loyalty; the same swaggering; the same hubris; the same desire, or the same obligation or coercion, to participate and fight." {3}

While in regard to humans killing, injuring, being violent toward and preying on other humans he asked,

> "Must we therefore be resigned to suffering, to misery, to injustices, to the iniquity, to the continuing iniquity, of selfish, hubriatic, individuals who bully, rape, scheme, subjugate, manipulate, injure, maim, and kill? Reassured by judicium divinum or – perhaps – hoping, trusting, in the pending justice of some judge, some government, or some State?" {4}

Myatt writes that his

> "fallible answer to the question of how to deal with the suffering that blights this world [is] the answer of a personal honour. That is, for each of us to gently try to carry that necessary harmony, that balance, of δίκη, wordlessly within; to thus restrain ourselves from causing harm while being able, prepared, in the immediacy of the moment, to personally, physically, restrain – prevent – others when we chance upon such harm being done. This, to me, is Life in its wholesome natural fullness – as lived, presenced, by the brief, mortal, consciously aware, emanations we are; mortal emanations capable of restraint, reason, culture, and reforming change; of learning from our pathei-mathos and that of others." {4}

His "fallible answer" may seem to many to be somewhat idealistic given the reality that those (to use a Myattian term) with a bad or rotten physis are not going to suddenly change their personality or are congenitally incapable of learning from 'the culture of pathei-mathos'. But understood in the context of his philosophy the answer is logical given Myatt's analysis of what the actual problem is or might be. An analysis which reveals that his philosophy is far from idealistic and in truth is rather radical, for in respect of the causes of suffering he writes in one memorable essay that

> "It is almost as if we – somehow flawed – need something beyond our personal lives to vivify us; to excite us; to test ourselves; to identify with. As if we cannot escape the barbarian who lies in wait, within; ready to subsume us once again so that we sally forth on behalf of some cause, some leader, or some ideal, or some abstraction, or as part of some crusade. As if we human beings, as Sophocles intimated over two thousand years ago, are indeed, by nature, and have remained sometimes honourable and sometimes dishonourable beings, able to sometimes be rational, thinking, beings, but also unable to escape our desire, our need, our propensity, to not only be barbaric but to try to justify to ourselves and to others our need for, and even our enjoyment of, such barbarity.
>
> Or perhaps the stark truth is that it is we men who are flawed or incomplete and who thus need to change. As if we, we men, have not yet evolved enough to be able to temper, to balance, our harsh masculous nature with the muliebral; a balance which would see us become almost a new species; one which has, having finally sloughed off the suffering-causing hubriatic patriarchal attitudes of the past, learnt from the pathei-mathos of our ancestors, from the pathei-mathos of our human culture, born and grown and nurtured as our human culture was, has been, and is by over four thousand years of human-caused suffering. A learning from and of the muliebral, for the wyrdful thread which runs through, which binds, our human pathei-mathos is a muliebral one: the thread of kindness, of gentleness, of love, of compassion; of empathy; of the personal over and above the supra-personal." {5}

In a later essay he is even more forthright, stating that

> "it is men – unbalanced in physis – who have caused and are responsible for wars, invasions, and the deaths and destruction and suffering that results, just as most violent crime and murders are caused by men. And it is they, of course, who have – also for millennia – dominated and manipulated women (or tried to), who have raped women, who have physically abused them, and killed so many of them, and all because some men cannot control themselves lacking as they do the virtue of honour." {6}

In regard to how he arrived at this conclusion he derived it as he derived most of his philosophy from his own pathei-mathos, from his own practical experiences extending over some four decades.

> "As I know from my outré experience of life – especially my forty years of extremism, hubris, and selfishness; my terms of imprisonment, my experience with gangs, with people of bad intentions and with those of good intentions – it really is as if we terran men have, en masse, learnt nothing from the past four or five thousand years." {7}

He is therefore not being idealistic or academic in an 'ivory tower' sort of way or basing his argument on statistics or on theories or ideologies propounded by others. He is instead writing from life having analysed his outré, his exeatic, his diverse experiences using 'the human culture of pathei-mathos' as a guide and it is therefore on that basis that his conclusions should be understood, judged and appreciated.

It is on that basis that in 2012 he wrote that

> "the uncomfortable truth is that we, we men, are and have been the ones causing, needing, participating in, those wars and conflicts. We – not women – are the cause of most of the suffering, death, destruction, hate, violence, brutality, and killing, that has occurred and which is still occurring, thousand year upon thousand year; just as we are the ones who seek to be – or who often need to be – prideful and 'in control'; and the ones who through greed or alleged need or because of some ideation have saught to exploit not only other human beings but the Earth itself. We are also masters of deception; of the lie. Cunning with our excuses, cunning in persuasion, and skilled at inciting hatred and violence. And yet we men have also shown ourselves to be, over thousands of years, valourous; capable of noble, selfless, deeds. Capable of doing what is fair and restraining ourselves from doing what is unethical. Capable of a great and a gentle love.
>
> This paradoxy continues to perplex me. And I have no answers as to how we might change, reform, this paradoxical φύσις of ours, and so – perhaps – balance the suffering-causing masculous with the empathic muliebral and yet somehow in some way retain that which is the genesis of the valourous." {7}

It is clear from his later writings that from 2012 on he pondered upon that paradoxy and arrived at a tentative and, in his words, a fallible answer. Which pondering he describes in some detail in his lengthy five part essay, published in 2013, titled *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*, and in which essay he gave voice to his doubts about the current solutions to the problem of personally-caused suffering – such as believing in judicium divinum (divine justice) or "trusting in the pending justice of some judge, some government, or some State." In a poignant passage he asked in respect of those personally causing suffering whether it was wrong for him

> "to still feel the need for someone, some many, somewhere, to somehow in some way forestall, prevent, such deeds by such persons as may unjustly harm some others so that there is no waiting for the divine justice of a deity; no waiting for some Court somewhere to – possibly, and sometimes – requite a grievous wrong. No waiting for that promised idealistic idyllic future society when we humans – having somehow (perhaps miraculously) been changed in nature en masse – have ceased to so grievously, harmfully, selfishly, inflict ourselves on others." {4}

He then presented his fallible answer, which was that

> "of a personal honour. That is, for each of us to gently try to carry that necessary harmony, that balance, of δίκη, wordlessly within; to thus restrain ourselves from causing harm while being able, prepared, in the immediacy of the moment, to personally, physically, restrain – prevent – others when we chance upon such harm being done." {4}

Myatt thus championed not only personal self-defence and "valorous defence of another in a personal situation" but also "if our personal judgement of the circumstances deem it necessary, lethal force." {8}

In respect of the question of suffering he therefore advocated something both quite practical, and quite radical at least the lands of the developed nations of the West.

The Practicalities of Personal Honour

As befits his decades of personal experience of the practicalities of life – thirty years as a violent political activist and propagandist, ten years as a Muslim activist, several years leading a criminal gang, among other experiences – Myatt was aware of how the governments of the nations of the West disapproved of individuals using their own judgement in regard to employing lethal force with many outlawing the carrying of such weapons as would enable effective self-defence and the "valorous defence of another in a personal situation."

In reply to a question asked of him in 2015 he wrote

> "how – or even can – societies in the West and around the world promote the virtue of empathy and personal honour, and if they could, would they want to given how most such societies (especially those in the West) are based on law and justice being the prerogative of the State? In respect of empathy at least, there is – as I suggested – the solution of Studia Humanitatis; that is, the solution of educating citizens in what I have termed the culture of pathei- mathos.
>
> But since personal honour means that individuals should have the right to bear and carry weapons, and be

lawfully able – in the immediacy of the personal moment – to use such weapons in self-defence and in valorous defence of others dishonourably attacked, it is most unlikely the governments or politicians of modern Western societies would even consider such an honourable solution to the problem of suffering. Indeed, they seem to be moving toward even more restrictions on individuals bearing and carrying weapons; moving toward severely punishing those who use weapons in self-defence or even in valorous defence of others dishonourably attacked.

That is, that there is in many Western societies a desire, by governments and politicians, for more control over their citizens, for more interventions, at home and abroad, in the name of 'security', and for the use of force to be lawfully restricted to those – such as the Police or the armed forces – who are appointed and who serve on the basis of a chain of command which stops with some government representative or some politician or some military leader responsible to one of the foregoing.

Thus, while I personally strive to uphold what honour demands in the immediacy of the moment, most people – even if they agreed with the principle – would be wary of doing so, given current laws in a country such as Britain. Or, more probably, they would consider it an unnecessary and possibly a retrograde thing to do." {9}

Although in the same reply he admits that his "own preoccupation in respect of personal honour may be somewhat misplaced" it is clear that regardless of such and other diplomatic language he personally supports the right of individuals to carry weapons for use in self-defence and in defence of others dishonourably attacked even though many Western governments have, fairly recently (in the last one hundred years), deemed the carrying of such weapons to be illegal despite the fact that the carrying of such weapons for such purposes was for thousands of years an acceptable cultural and ancestral custom among the peoples of the West.

Which perhaps – and yet again – places Myatt on the side of our ancestral Western culture. An ancestral culture whose metaphysics and ethos he has not only described in recent (2017) works of his such as *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* but also and importantly evolved, beyond mythoi and thus beyond named gods and goddesses.

A Western culture exemplified, according to Myatt, by καλὸς κἀγαθός. That is, by those who "conduct themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner and who thus manifest – because of their innate physis or through pathei-mathos or through a certain type of education or learning – nobility of character," {10} and which nobility of character is manifest in "the virtues of personal honour and manners" {10} and which Western culture was also – according to Myatt and contra modern 'political correctness' – manifest in a natural and necessary aristocracy composed of those who possess nobility of character and who thus exemplify καλὸς κἀγαθός.

Rachael Stirling
February 2018

{1} The book *The Mystical Philosophy of David Myatt* by Wright & Parker is an informative guide to Myatt's philosophy. The book is available as a gratis open access pdf document here: https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/myatt-philosophy-third-edition.pdf

{2} *Education And The Culture Of Pathei-Mathos*. 2014.

{3} *A Slowful Learning, Perhaps*. 2012.

{4} *Questions of Good, Evil, Honour, and God*, Part Five. 2013.

{5} *A Slowful Learning, Perhaps*. 2012.

{6} *Questions For DWM*. 2015.

{7} *Blue Reflected Starlight*. 2012.

{8} qv. *The Numinous Balance of Honour* section of the chapter *The Way of Pathei-Mathos – A Philosophical Compendium* in Myatt's 2013 book *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*.

{9} *Questions For DWM, 2015*.

{10} *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*. 2017

A New Pagan Metaphysics

In November of 2017 David Myatt published his book *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* in which he described his view of the difference between Christianity and the paganism of Ancient Greece and Rome and set out to, in his words, develope that "paganism in a metaphysical way, beyond the deities of classical mythos."

This was followed a month later by his *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* and in which iconoclastic work he provided his answers to particular metaphysical questions such as whether Christianity really is a suitable presencing of the numinous. If it is not, "then what non-Christian alternatives – such as a paganus metaphysics – exist, and what is the foundation of such an alternative."

While these books are not expositions of his philosophy they not only provide interesting and relevant insights into Christianity and classical paganism but also illuminate particular aspects of his own philosophy. For instance, in *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* he writes that "the numinous is primarily a manifestation of the muliebral," and that revealed religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism primarily manifest a presencing of the masculous. In *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* he writes that "the quintessence of such a weltanschauung, of the paganus ethos, is that ethics are presenced in and by particular living individuals, not in some written text whether philosophical or otherwise, not by some proposed schemata, and not in some revelation from some deity."

In both books he makes use of the Greek term καλὸς κἀγαθός stating, in *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, that this

> "means those who conduct themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner and who thus manifest – because of their innate physis or through pathei-mathos or through a certain type of education or learning – nobility of character."

In *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* he writes that

> "καλὸς κἀγαθός is an awareness and acceptance of one's civic duties and responsibilities undertaken not because of any personal benefit (omni utilitate) that may result or be expected, and not because an omnipotent deity has, via some written texts, commanded it and will punish a refusal, but because it is the noble, the honourable – the gentlemanly, the lady-like, the human – thing to do […]
>
> [T]he virtues of personal honour and manners, with their responsibilities, presence the fairness, the avoidance of hubris, the natural harmonious balance, the gender equality, the awareness and appreciation of the divine, that is the numinous."

Which in my view neatly sums up his philosophy of pathei-mathos, particularly given his statement that the numinous is primarily a manifestation of the muliebral, and that

> "a muliebral presencing is or would be manifest [in] muliebral virtues, such as empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion; and in the perception that personal love should triumph over and above adherence to abstractions. Considered exoterically – not interiorly, not esoterically – a muliebral presencing is manifest in a personal, varied, worship and devotion; in a personal weltanschauung and not in a religion; has no hierarchy; no creed, no article or articles of faith; and no texts whether written or aural."

As he notes in his short essay *From Mythoi To Empathy* {1}, "the faculty of empathy is the transition from mythoi and anthropomorphic deities (theos and theoi) to an appreciation of the numinous sans denotatum and sans religion."

He thus outlines a new 'pagan' metaphysics, or rather provides an understandable description of his own weltanschauung, which is

> "of we human beings having a connexion to other living beings, a connexion to the cosmos beyond, and a connexion to the source of our existence, the source of the cosmos, and the source – the origin, the genesis – of all living beings. Which source we cannot correctly describe in words, by any denotata, or define as some male 'god', or even as a collection of deities whether male or female, but which we can apprehend through the emanations of Being: through what is living, what is born, what unfolds in a natural manner, what is ordered and harmonious, what changes, and what physically – in its own species of Time – dies.
>
> An awareness of all these connexions is awareness of, and a respect for, the numinous, for these connexions, being acausal, are affective: that is, we are inclined by our physis (whether we apprehend it or not) to have an influence on that which, or those whom, the connexion is to or from. For what we do or do not do, consciously or otherwise, affects or can affect the cosmos and thus the other livings beings which exist in the cosmos, and it is a conscious awareness of connexions and acausal affects, with their causal consequences, which reason, perceiverance, and empathy make us – or can make us – aware of. Which awareness may incline us toward acting, and living, in a noble way, with what is noble known or experienced, discovered, through and because of (i) the personal virtue of honour, evident as honour is in fairness, manners and a balanced demeanour, and (ii) the wordless knowing of empathy, manifest as empathy is in compassion and tolerance.
>
> For Being is also, and importantly, presenced – manifest to us, as mortals possessed of reason, empathy, and perceiverance – through certain types of individuals and thus through the particular ways of living that nurture or encourage such individuals. These types of individuals are those who have empathy and who live and if necessary die by honour and thus who have nobility of character." {2}

Those "certain types of individuals" who presence Being are of course those who manifest καλὸς κἀγαθός, and thus those who, in Myatt's words, manifest chivalry, manners, gentrice romance; and the muliebral virtues, {3} which virtues include "empathy, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion" as well as "the perception that personal love should triumph over and above adherence to abstractions." {4}

JR Wright
2018

{1} The essay is available here: https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/from-mythoi-to-empathy/

{2} *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*, Epilogos. CreateSpace, 2017. ISBN 978-1979599023. An Open Access gratis copy of *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* is available at https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com /2018/03/classical-paganism-v2-print.pdf

{3} *From Mythoi To Empathy*.

{4} *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua*, chapter III. CreateSpace, 2017. ISBN 978-1982010935. An Open Access gratis copy of *Tu Es Diaboli Ianua* is available at https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/tua-es-diaboli-ianua.pdf

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Appendix I

Concerning ἀγαθός and νοῦς in the Corpus Hermeticum

Three of the many Greek terms of interest in respect of understanding the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts that comprise the Corpus Hermeticum are ἀγαθός and νοῦς and θεός, with conventional translations of these terms as 'good' and 'Mind' and 'god' (or God) imparting the sense of reading somewhat declamatory sermons about god/God and 'the good' familiar from over a thousand years of persons preaching about Christianity interspersed with definitive philosophical statements about 'Mind', as if a "transcendent intelligence, rationality," or a "Mental or psychic faculty" or both, or something similar, is meant or implied.

Thus the beginning of tractate VI – τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὦ ᾽Ασκληπιέ, ἐν οὐδενί ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ θεῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς ἀεί – and dealing as it does with both ἀγαθός and θεός, has been translated, by Mead, as "Good, O Asclepius, is in none else save God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally," [1] and by Copenhaver as "The good, Asclepius, is in nothing except in god alone, or rather god himself is always the good." [2]

In respect of νοῦς, a typical example is from Poemandres 12 – ὁ δὲ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς, ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον αὐτῷ ἴσον, οὗ ἠράσθη ὡς ἰδίου τόκου· περικαλλὴς γάρ, τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων· ὄντως γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἠράσθη τῆς ἰδίας μορφῆς, παρέδωκε τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάντα δημιουργήματα. The beginning of this is translated by Mead as "But All-Father Mind, being Life and Light, did bring forth Man co-equal to Himself, with whom He fell in love, as being His own child for he was beautiful beyond compare," and by Copenhaver as "Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father's image."

Similarly, in respect of Poemandres 22 – παραγίνομαι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ὁ Νοῦς τοῖς ὁσίοις καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ ἐλεήμοσι, τοῖς εὐσεβοῦσι, καὶ ἡ παρουσία μου γίνεται βοήθεια, καὶ εὐθὺς τὰ πάντα γνωρίζουσι καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἱλάσκονται ἀγαπητικῶς καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσιν εὐλογοῦντες καὶ ὑμνοῦντες τεταγμένως πρὸς αὐτὸν τῇ στοργῇ – which is translated by Mead as "I, Mind, myself am present with holy men and good, the pure and merciful, men who live piously. [To such] my presence doth become an aid, and straightway they gain gnosis of all things, and win the Father's love by their pure lives, and give Him thanks, invoking on Him blessings, and chanting hymns, intent on Him with ardent love," and by Copenhaver as "I myself, the mind, am present to the blessed and good and pure and merciful – to the reverent – and my presence becomes a help; they quickly recognize everything, and they propitiate the father lovingly and give thanks, praising and singing hymns affectionately and in the order appropriate to him."

As explained in various places in my commentary on tractates I, III, IV, VIII, and XI, and in two appendices [3], I incline toward the view that – given what such English terms as 'the good', Mind, and god now impute, often as a result of two thousand years of Christianity and post-Renaissance, and modern, philosophy – such translations tend to impose particular and modern interpretations on the texts and thus do not present to the reader the ancient ethos that forms the basis of the varied weltanschauungen outlined in the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum.

To avoid such impositions, and in an endeavour to express at least something of that ancient (and in my view non-Christian) ethos, I have – for reasons explained in the relevant sections of my commentary – transliterated θεὸς as theos [4], νοῦς as perceiveration, or according to context, perceiverance; and ἀγαθός as, according to context, nobility, noble, or honourable [5]. Which is why my reading of the Greek of the three examples above provides the reader with a somewhat different impression of the texts:

> ° Asclepius, the noble exists in no-thing: only in theos alone; indeed, theos is, of himself and always, what is noble. [6]
>
> ° Perceiveration, as Life and phaos, father of all, brought forth in his own likeness a most beautiful mortal who, being his child, he loved.
>
> ° I, perceiveration, attend to those of respectful deeds, the honourable, the refined, the compassionate, those aware of the numinous; to whom my being is a help so that they soon acquire knowledge of the whole and are affectionately gracious toward the father, fondly celebrating in song his position.

But, as I noted in respect of ἀγαθός in the *On Ethos And Interpretation* appendix, whether these particular insights of mine are valid, others will have to decide. But they – and my translations of the tractates in general – certainly, at least in my fallible opinion, convey an impression about ancient Hermeticism which is rather different from that conveyed by other translations.

David Myatt
March 2017

Extract from a letter in reply to a correspondent who, in respect of the Corpus Hermeticum, enquired about my translation of terms such as ἀγαθός and νοῦς. I have, for publication here, added a footnote which references my translations of and commentaries on five tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum.

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Notes

[1] G.R.S Mead. *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*. Theosophical Society (London). 1906.

[2] B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992

[3] My translation of and commentary on tractates I, III, IV, VIII and XI are available in my book *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. International Standard Book Number: 978-1976452369

[4] To be pedantic, when θεὸς is mentioned in the texts it often literally refers to 'the' theos so that at the beginning of tractate VI, for example, the reference is to 'the theos' rather than to 'god'.

[5] In respect of 'the good' – τὸ ἀγαθόν – as 'honourable', qv. Seneca, Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, LXXI, 4, "summum bonum est quod honestum est. Et quod magis admireris: unum bonum est, quod honestum est, cetera falsa et adulterina bona sunt."

[6] The suggestion seems to be that 'the theos' is the origin, the archetype, of what is noble, and that only through and because of theos can what is noble be presenced and recognized for what it is, and often recognized by those who are, or that which is, an eikon of theos. Hence why in tractate IV it is said that "the eikon will guide you,"; why in tractate XI that "Kosmos is the eikon of theos, Kosmos [the eikon] of Aion, the Sun [the eikon] of Aion, and the Sun [the eikon] of mortals," and why in the same tractate it is said that "there is nothing that cannot be an eikon of theos," and why in Poemandres 31 theos is said to "engender all physis as eikon."

As I noted in my commentary – qv. especially the mention of Maximus of Constantinople in respect of Poemandres 31 – I have transliterated εἰκὼν.

Appendix II

A Review Of Myatt's Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos

Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos. 2017.
ISBN 978-1979599023. 42 pages.

An Open Access gratis copy of *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* is available at
https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/classical-paganism-v2-print.pdf

In the Fall of 2017 David Myatt released extracts from his forthcoming book *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* and which extracts led dozens of individuals interested in Myatt's works to eagerly await the publication of the book itself given that such extracts seemed to imply that he intended to create a modern, Western, paganism founded on the warrior ethos of ancient Greece and Rome, with Myatt in his extract writing that

> "such a modern paganus weltanschauung may also be a means to reconnect those in the lands of the West, and those in Western émigré lands and former colonies of the West, with their ancestral ethos, for them to thus become, or return to being, a living, dwelling, part – a connexion between the past and the future – of what is still a living, and evolving, culture. Perhaps the future of that culture depends on whether sufficient individuals can live by the high personal standards of such a modern paganus weltanschauung."

However, when Myatt issued the first draft of the complete book in early November 2017 some individuals were disappointed since the promised 'modern paganus weltanschauung' seemed to be just a watered-down version of his mystical philosophy of pathei mathos. Myatt, as is his wont, then over several weeks revised this draft many times {1} culminating on November 9th 2017 in a printed version – a so-called 'second edition' – together with an updated 'gratis open access' pdf version containing the same text and which he made available on his internet blog. {2}

As Myatt notes in the Introduction to the printed edition: "For this Second Edition, I have clarified and extended the text in several places, added a revised version of my essay *From Aeschylus To The Numinous Way* as an Appendix, and taken the opportunity to correct some typos."

As the blurb for the book states, it is

> "a study in the difference between Christianity and the paganism of Ancient Greece and Rome, evident as that paganism is in the writings of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Cicero and many other classical authors. A study which includes developing that paganism in a metaphysical way, beyond the deities of classical mythos, thus making such paganism relevant to the modern Western world. A modern development which involves an analysis of the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum."

The final published work does indeed develop Greco-Roman paganism in a metaphysical way, with Myatt writing in chapter 3 that

> "the quintessence of such a weltanschauung, of the paganus ethos, is that ethics are presenced in and by particular living individuals, not in some written text whether philosophical or otherwise, not by some proposed schemata, and not in some revelation from some deity. Which paganus ethics, when evolved – combined with the paganus mysticism evident in the Corpus Hermeticum and the cultural pathei-mathos of the past two millennia presenced through the insight of empathy – leads us to a modern paganus weltanschauung."

He concludes his study by writing that

> "the paganus weltanschauung, ancestral to the lands of the West, that has emerged is one which, shorn of technical, Greek, and metaphysical terms, many may find familiar or already be intuitively aware of […]
>
> [This] awareness of all these connexions is awareness of, and a respect for, the numinous, for these connexions, being acausal, are affective: that is, we are inclined by our physis (whether we apprehend it or not) to have an influence on that which, or those whom, the connexion is to or from. For what we do or do not do, consciously or otherwise, affects or can affect the cosmos and thus the other livings beings which exist in the cosmos, and it is a conscious awareness of connexions and acausal affects, with their causal consequences, which reason, perceiverance, and empathy make us – or can make us – aware of. Which awareness may incline us toward acting, and living, in a noble way, with what is noble known or experienced, discovered, through and because of (i) the personal virtue of honour, evident as honour is in fairness, manners and a balanced demeanour, and (ii) the wordless knowing of empathy, manifest as empathy is in compassion and tolerance."

For the crux of his argument is that Western paganism differs fundamentally from – and is better than – a revealed religion such as Christianity because in that paganism ethics are "presenced in and by particular living individuals, not in some written text whether philosophical or otherwise, not by some proposed schemata, and not in some revelation from some deity," in contrast to Christianity whose ethics can be discovered by having to interpret "the word of God" as found in the texts of the Old and New Testaments. He adds that "a reliance on written texts, as in Christianity, may well be a mistake."

His modern pagan metaphysics therefore balances the Greco-Roman human ideal – which Myatt writes can be expressed in one Greek phrase: καλὸς κἀγαθός – with the insights resulting from millennia of pathei mathos, expressed in Studia Humanitatis, in what he calls 'the culture of pathei-mathos'. {3}

As a result, the book – replete with copious quotations in Ancient and Hellenistic Greek – is curiously interesting explaining much about Greco-Roman paganism and hermeticism, as well as about Christianity. Yet it is difficult to know who the intended readers are since many of those interested in Western paganism as a new way of life or as a modern, non-Christian, spirituality may find it too academic or too boring; while those academically interested in such matters will doubtless turn to other authors given Myatt's experiential Faustian quests, his iconoclasm, his often underserved reputation, and thus his exclusion from academia.

Perhaps Myatt intended the book for those few individuals who can or who aspire "to live by the high personal standards of such a modern paganus weltanschauung" because such a paganism may reconnect some of "those in the lands of the West, and those in Western émigré lands and former colonies of the West, with their ancestral ethos".

R.S & K.S
November, 2017

N.B. As with almost all of Myatt's printed books, the size is idiosyncratic, being 11 inches x 8.5 inches in format, which is larger than the conventional 'trade paperback' (6 inches by 9 inches). In terms of number of pages, 20+ pages should be added to such 'large format' books in order to approximate the number of pages in a standard 6 inches by 9 inches paperback.

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{1} In our view Myatt is to be commended for making public his revisions of his texts. As someone recently wrote: "The extracts and subsequent revised extracts from his texts and translations that Myatt has published on his blog over the years provide an interesting insight into the creative process. A process which many authors and academics for some reason seem to want to keep secret. Perhaps some of them want to try and hide their mistakes or how their thoughts and opinions change or evolve as a result of further research, or more inspiration, or more thought."

{2} https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2017/11/05/reason-and-belief/

{3} This 'culture of pathei mathos' is one of the central themes of Myatt's philosophy of pathei-mathos. See his essay *Education and the Culture of Pathei-Mathos*, included in his 2014 book *One Vagabond In Exile From The Gods*. The book is also available at https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/one-vagabond-pathei-mathos.pdf

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Image credit:
Orestes and the Ἐρινύες. Red figure vase, c. 380 BCE

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